286 not equally skillful, but some of them know how to weave cloth which is fine, tightly woven, and quite strong. Sewn together and cut according to unchanging patterns, these strips are made into breechcloths, trousers, wide shirts, full robes which cover the whole body, and especially men's and women's blankets, white or dark blue, which are an indispensable protection against the cold and which are worn wrapped around the body. Mossi fabrics are quite well-known in neighboring territories, and as we shall see they are an important trade item.

386 It is customary to dye the garments after they are made or the thread before it is woven. The dyer's trade is quite widespread in Mossi country, and there is no important /56/ village without dyers. They get together to dig their wells in the same spot; often choosing a small hillock for the purpose where they sink about ten wells, two or three meters deep, the inner surface baked with a charcoal fire. The dyeing solutions are poured into these wells, and the clothes or thread to be dyed are immersed in the liquid and stirred with sticks that have at the end pieces of wood set in the shape of a cross. Fabrics are left soaking for varying periods of time depending on their bulk, and then they are spread out in the sun to dry. The colors obtained vary from a very dark blue, nearly black, to light blue. Certain clothes are dyed sienna, a color favored by hunters because it is dark. Several washings are needed to remove the strong odor which permeates cloth dyed in this fashion, but each washing removes part of the dye.

285 Everyone knows how to weave, and almost everyone knows how to make basketry. When the grass is full grown, the children have fun making straw hats, some of which are not badly done; others make containers in various patterns by mixing yellow and black straws, and red ones dyed with the leaves of a variety of millet, cultivated in order to obtain the red shade desired for coloring leather; yet others plait simple trays of straw which are used to cover the gourds or to carry meat.

294 Those who are skillful make sturdy hats adorned with leather figures, and this becomes a veritable industry. There are two main kinds of hats: those shaped like pointed cones, and the bell-shaped hats with a wide brim. They are so ample that they can easily be worn over a cap which is sometimes wrapped in a strip of soft fabric. A leather [284] strap with a sliding knot holds the hat in place or permits it to hang down one's back with the cord holding it at the neck. Saponé is the manufacturing center for hats.

285 The art of basketry, however, is exercised primarily to produce woven containers. These serve many purposes and come in all shapes and sizes from large wicker containers used to protect chicks against birds of prey and small wicker baskets for collecting refuse to baskets of plaited grass for carrying millet, rice, and most other goods. Some baskets are made with greater care, decorated with designs made by mixing dyed grasses and thin leather strips and edged with cowries.

[462] Only the men do basketry, and only they work with leather; some
281 of them make leather objects which are almost artistic and very well sewn. Unfortunately the natives do not know how to tan skins properly, and their leather has no strength. The hide is simply stretched out and dried by the sun; sometimes it is briefly immersed in water containing tamarind bark. The hair is removed by pouring hot water onto the skin and then scraping it off with a knife. To make it softer, the skin is moved back and forth over a stake planted in the ground and slightly sharpened at the tip, or it is simply crumpled /57/ between the hands. When it has been softened, it is stretched once more to dry in the sun, held with small wooden pegs driven into the
● [386] ground. It may be dyed red, green, or black with special herbs.

Some men make knife or saber sheaths; others specialize in the long gaiters which are tied to the belt and worn by every horseman in full regalia; still others make saddle rugs stuffed with kapok or cotton and decorated with designs. They also make the various parts of the harness: the leather strip which runs across the horse's chest, and the
294 large rug which covers its rump. Leather is also used to make all kinds
281 of footgear, from the mere piece of hide held to the feet by leather strips running between the big and second toes and all round the foot, to the Turkish-type slipper and the ornamented boots with spurs attached which are a natural complement to the long gaiters. Some of the shoemakers are truly skillful and could make quite satisfactory shoes if they had lasts and especially if they had better leather.

281 Hide is also used in the manufacture of belts adorned with cowries, pouches, amulets, bags which are sometimes nicely adorned, etc. The designs are usually made as follows: small leather strips of various colors are sewn onto a skin of solid color which serves as a base; more rarely, as in Morocco, the top layer of skin is removed.

462 The above-mentioned industries are performed exclusively by men, and any male individual may practice them. The preparation of gun powder and tobacco is also male work. The industries listed below,

137 They are 7 or 8 meters tall, 10 meters at most, and their huge fruits are bunched in clusters of five or six rather than forty or fifty.

137 There are no rônier in the Mossi bush itself, but there are some in every Mossi village. They originated from seeds tossed at random 222 after eating the fruits, or from an ancient cultivation of the tree. The rônier, therefore, is not a natural product of Mossi territory and should not, in all exactitude, be listed among the gathering crops. On the other hand, can it be listed with the cultivated crops at the present day, and can we call cultivation the act of tossing seeds to the ground in order to get rid of them? No matter what the truth may be, the Mossi eat /503/ the fruits of their rônier but do not extract any palm wine. As we have just said, they use the fibers of the leaves for their wickerwork.

137 While the rônier occur in Mossi territory, there are, on the other hand, no palm-oil trees and palmier-ban /?/. Those begin to appear only in Gourounsi territory, to the south of the Mossi.

222 137 We have just reviewed the most important gathering trees in the area, but the Mossi bush contains many others, less important to be sure but nevertheless useful, which we shall now mention.

First, there is the ganra or ganga (sounsoun in Mandé, diomba in Peuhl and Sarakolé). This is the medlar tree of West Africa. In appearance, it is a big tree similar to the karité but even bigger, with a thicker and more powerful trunk.

The fruit is a medlar, smaller than the European one. When green, it has the same acrid taste and numbs the mouth. When ripe, it is such as we eat it in Europe. The natives begin to eat it during the rainy season and consume it until January.

386 The wives of Bambara blacksmiths make a varnish for pots and canari with the bark of the sounsoun. As for the wives of Mossi 171 blacksmiths, they prefer to use for this purpose the bark of two trees we shall mention later, the nobora and the sibi. In Gourounsi territory, on the other hand, the women who make pottery pluck the medlars while still green and crush them. They add water, thus making a sort of varnish which they use on the canari after they are fired. The ganra is called kano in Nounouma, kakano in Kassouna, kalo in Sissala, and ganra or ganga in Nankana and Mossi.

125 Let us add that among the Mossi, as in all of West Africa, the ganra tree is closely related to fetishistic superstitions, and will be mentioned again in a later chapter on religion.

322 salt, etc. Small bows are worth 20 cowries, medium ones 70, and [435] large ones 100.

285 We have just reviewed woodworking. Let us proceed to basketry. Here the latter gives rise to two major trades, the basket maker's and the hat maker's. Let us study them in turn.

As an example, here is Niandé Zango, a basket maker and head of a soukala. He has two wives and three children. His soukala numbers five huts.

He works in the fields during the winter season, and at his trade during the dry season. His fields bring him the larger returns.

He makes his baskets at home without waiting for an order, and he has his wives sell them at market.

He gets doudouma straw in the bush and cultivates mono in his maize field.

[314] Doudouma is a tall grass that is left to dry and that furnishes excellent straw for the manufacture of baskets and trays.

Doudoumidou is doudouma straw dyed red with mono.

249 386 285 Mono (faraoro in Bambara) is a plant grown by the Mossi in their maize fields, around the soukala. It looks a great deal like large red millet, but it is /525/ not the same thing. It is probably a variety of large millet, however. Mono is sown along with maize when the first rains begin to fall. Holes are made with the koutiaga, mono grains placed within and covered up. When mono has emerged from the ground, the weeds are pulled out. The harvesting is done about two and a half months after sowing. The stalks are severed at the base and left to dry in the sun, and then the sheaths and culms are torn off. The latter are the parts used to dye the straw red.

The sheaths and culms are crushed by rubbing them by hand in a canari full of water. Then the doudouma straw is left to soak in this canari. The canari is placed on the fire, where it is kept for six hours. When this is over, the straw, now dyed red, is removed.

386 285 Doudousabalé is doudouma straw dyed black by immersion in bérédo. The straw is gathered, taken to a watercourse, and buried in bérédo. It is left there for a whole day, and this gives it a shiny grey hue.

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294 closer to our European hats and vaguely recalls a very fat and swollen straw bowler with wide rims.

In order to make the former kind, our hat maker begins by bringing together a hundred strings. He ties them at one end, an end left in its original straw state, and thus fashions the tip of the hat. Then he interlaces these strings by hand with bits of unmodified kansé straw. The strings hang vertically, the straw pieces are interlaced horizontally, and this makes up the web of the hat.

[386] /528/ The bits of kansé are often dyed black beforehand by immersion in the mud of a watercourse. This is how black lines and designs are obtained in certain parts of the hat.

[435] Six days are needed to make a hat. It is sold for 1,000 cowries, of course without the ornaments, straps, and strips of leather that will be added by the shoemaker.

Hat makers fashion these hats in advance and have their wives well them at market.

248 Bérenga or hemp (also called tamora among the Mossi) goes into the manufacture of straw hats as well. We saw above, when discussing cultivation, how bérenga is grown. It is sown either among maize or among large red millet, that is to say around the soukala, or even in fields in the bush among small millet or large white millet. If sown among maize, it is sown three days afterwards; if among large red millet, four days later; if among large white millet, ten days later; and if among small millet, ten or twelve days afterward.

Bérenga is harvested ten or twenty days after maize, if it stands in a maize field. If it has been sown among millet, it is harvested seven days afterwards. Bérenga stalks are severed at the base, and the fibrous bark is removed and dried. Bérenga is green when fresh and reddish brown when dry. It is usually made into strings and cords. It is also used for the thatch roofing of huts. When it is to go into
285 the making of a hat, it is dyed black by immersion in bérédo and used
294 along with kansé to furnish the black lines of the hats.

Here are some sample products of the Mossi hat-making industry:

1. Pointed straw hats made of kansé (yellow) and bérenga (black). They sport leather ornaments and straps added by the
[435] shoemaker. They are worth 2,500 cowries.

386 There are dyers as well as weavers and tailors among the Mossi.
177 "Dyer" is garalosadaba in Mossi, from gara, "indigo" and sadaba, "maker." There are no dyers in the southern part of Mossi territory but only in the north, from Ouagadougou upward. This would tend to prove that just as the Mossi probably learned cotton weaving from the Yarsé, they must have learned the dyer's craft from the Songhay, with whom they have had contact toward the north. Actually, Songhay emigrants have established villages in the northern part of the Ouagadougou circle, and the dyer's craft is their chief industry. This strongly corroborates our theory. Let us add that /535/ the Mossi practice dyeing in certain places, at certain spots, so to speak. One may not find a single dyer in a large number of Mossi villages, and then all at once come upon a locality with thirty dyers' wells, such as Yakki for example.

386 To present a Ouagadougou dyer, here is a Mossi by the name
249 of Gomdounguiba Nangakoré. He does not himself cultivate indigo. He buys it at market in loaves or balls. Anyone may grow indigo among the Mossi (see the section on cultivation above). When it
[435] is ripe, the leaves are gathered, heaped in a wooden gourd, and pressed to make loaves worth 50, 100, or 500 cowries. The dyer buys the loaves at market.

386 He dyes either cotton threads or strips, or even garments (cloaks, etc.). The item to be dyed is brought to him. In short, he usually does custom work.

Sometimes, nevertheless, he buys thread, strips, cloaks, or skirts, dyes them, and has them sold at market by his wife or wives.

Every dyer sinks a dyeing well outside, but right beside, his soukala. He makes a neatly squared hole, quadrangular, about 60 centimeters long by 60 wide and 1 meter deep. This hole is tamped carefully several times, and the clay walls are polished with water prepared with néré bark. Finally, water is poured in to see whether it is watertight. About three days are needed to make one of those wells. Every dyer has one.

In order to dye thread, strips or garments, millet-stalk ashes are placed in water, strained, and tossed to the bottom of the dyeing hole. Then come the ashes of a tree called gouara by the Mossi (the ashes themselves are called zato or iato). They are laid

386 at the bottom of the hole. A loaf of indigo is added, and then water. The ingredients are left to blend for three days, and then the thread, strips, etc., may be immersed.

The coloring mixture is replaced every twenty days. It leaves at the bottom of the dyeing well a sort of yellow-grey crust which is removed and allowed to dry in the sun. Once dry, it /536/ is reduced to powder and added to the next mixture.

Cotton threads, in order to be dyed, are immersed in the mixture and crumpled with the fingers. At nighttime they are removed and left to dry on the hut roof. The dyeing is resumed on the morrow. At the end of three days, the threads are black. Only two days are needed to obtain dark-blue threads, and one day is sufficient for light-blue threads. The same applies to cotton strips and garments.

Our dyer does not exercise his trade during the winter season. At that time, he undertakes nothing but cultivation. It is during the dry season that he is a dyer. He claims, however, that his trade nets him more than his fields.

386 435 To dye cotton threads he asks 200 cowries to dye a bundle black, from 60 to 100 to dye it dark blue, or 50 cowries to dye it light blue.

When he buys a cloak to dye it (he buys it for 1,500 cowries, for example) he resells it dyed black for 3,000 cowries, dark blue for 2,000, or light blue for 1,700.

286 435 Mossi fabrics are as follows:

1. White or off-white fabric, undyed. It is called pempéla. It is worth 25 cowries a cubit, that is, the length from the elbow to the tip of the fingers.

2. The white fabric with blue strips called nakoré. It is made of white threads and threads dyed blue. It is worth 50 cowries a cubit.

3. The fabric with small blue and white checks called arkilla. It is worth 50 cowries a cubit.

4. The dark-blue fabric with scattered white stripes. It is called ganga, and it is worth 50 cowries a cubit.

5. Finally, the blue fabric with blue and white stripes called oulambala or oulambalé, which costs 75 cowries or one sou and a half a cubit.